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Ya'acobi inaugurates new Haifa railway station Beirut-Cairo rail link offered

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HAIFA. — Transport Minister Gad Ya'acobi yesterday offered to re-open the rail link between Baghdad and the Mediterranean, and between Egypt and Lebanon, through Israel, "within the framework of an interim agreement, before peace is made."

He made the proposal, on behalf of the Government, at the official opening of the new Bat Galim railway station, next to the Haifa Central Bus Station, yesterday afternoon.

Ya'acobi welcomed the establishment of the country's first "transport complex" of bus and rail services in Haifa, and stressed that the Ministry's policy was to prefer pub-

lic transport. It would develop the railways as part of it, including the line to Ellat. This preference would be extended in the form of lower fares, priority on the roads, means.

The railways, for example, would this year get one third of the Ministry's development budget, he said. Railways saved fuel, were safer and environmentally preferable. In addition, Ya'acobi said, the railroad to Ellat would enable Israel to exploit its geopolitical position, between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea.

Asked what the Ministry was doing to supervise the service the bus companies provided — a service he considered "preferential" — Ya'acobi said it could not inspect the 6,000 bus lines in the country. Indeed, as a result of the budget cuts,

the number of inspectors, which was not high, might be further reduced.

The only feasible control was for the travelling public to inform the Controller of Road Transport when the service was bad.

Returning to transport development plans, Ya'acobi said the Ports Authority was proceeding with a survey of the proposed new deep-sea port at Yamit, in northern Sinai. When it reports by next summer he would put the matter before the Government.

The railways' general manager, Zvi Zafriri, said at the ceremony that the era of the railroads was returning all over the world, and he hoped that despite budget limitations Israel would not "miss the train."